

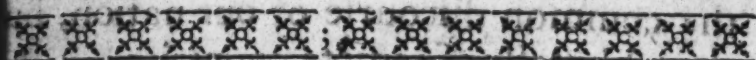
THE
LIFE and DEATH
OF
Fair ROSAMOND,
CONCUBINE to
King HENRY the Second;
Shewing her being poisoned by
Queen ELEANOR.



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The History of
Fair ROSAMOND.



C H A P. I.

The Family of Fair Rosamond, with a
Description of her Person.



THere sprung from the antient and
most noble house of the Cliffords, a
damsel, named Rosamond, daughter to
the Lord Walter Clifford. Her beauty
was couched under her name. She was
Nature's master-piece, and one of the
fairest Roses that ever flourished upon the
earth.

This Lady as she grew in years, grew
in favour, each year adding to her great

perfections. And having obtained unto some years, Fame carried her praise into foreign places, whereby she was not only the common discourse of our nation, but the table talk of remote countries.

One thing, as being the shortest way of giving the reader a sketch of this great beauty, and which very much tended to the ruina of Rosamond, we must not omit. Once when King Henry and a courtier of his were together, the King taking an opportunity to commend with more than ordinary heat, one of the court, the courtier told him, He thought his Majesty praised her more than her perfections did deserve, but that he had a neice whose beauty was peerless ; and then began to talk of her as the most beautiful of the creation, telling the King, That both her eyes sparkled like two twin stars, her forehead was like a haven of chrystal, her eye brows shun like jet, a sprig of roses and lillies were in her cheeks so mixed, that nature before never made so fair a mixture of the purest white and red.

To be brief, he told the King she was nature's master piece, who when she had

made her, cry'd, A lucky hit, and threw away the mold, that none so lovely and charming might come after, to dazzle the eyes of mankind, and to wound their hearts.

The King hearing this relation, could but smile with joy, and demanded of him in what corner of the earth so great a beauty could be hid ? At this, the courtier perceiving he had gone too far, and the King began to be enamoured at the bare report, would have drawn his words in again, telling the King he had made this report only to set out a perfect beauty to the life.—But the King perceiving by the coldness of his reply, there was more than ordinary in it, ordered him immediately to speak the truth. And the courtier fearing the King's displeasure he plainly said, There is a Lady, daughter to Lord Walter Clifford, of whom many noble persons have been enamoured, and have sought her in marriage, but have been denied, on account of her tender years.

It was not long before the king resolved to take a tour to her father's house, and on coming there he was welcomed by the

Lady, who fearing what his design was ordered their daughter not to come into his presence. But the King, finding she was at home, demanded to see her vowing he would not dine till he had. So that all her excuses of illness availed nothing. Then she was ordered to put on her best apparel, and come down, that she might pay her duty unto the King; which she did in the most courtly manner, her blushes, if possible, adding to her beauty, so that at the first sight she appeared in his eyes like a bright angel; whereupon he eagerly saluted her, and dinner being placed upon the table, he commanded she should sit down, causing her to be placed directly over against him, on whose pretty eyes he so long gazed, that he forgot sometimes to eat.



C H A P II.

The King gains the Love; of Fair
Rosamond.

THE King having been so very highly entertained by Rosamond's father, had several opportunities of discoursing in private with the charming virgin, whom he so much won upon by presents of rich Jewels, and other costly things, that he raised an ambition in her tender breast, that before was a stranger to it, and often protested, that was his Queen to die, he would raise her to the dignity of the crown.

He also bestowed his gold liberally on the woman who had the care of her education, which so blinded her, and prevailed over her conscience, that she promised him to do all that was in her power to forward his wish'd for happiness. And so taking leave of his beloved Rosamond, with many loving kisses, he for that time departed.

The King immediately returned to his palace, but could never be at rest, for the violent passion which still reigned in his breast. He could not sleep of nights, nor attend his councils of days.

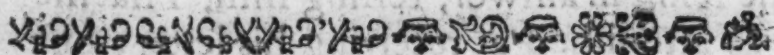
At length he resolved to write to her, let his fate be whatever it might, and so accordingly he wrote a letter to Fair Rosamond, in which he told her it was she who was his guardian angel, that he held her dearer than his crown, and said, his stay from her should not be long, promising to set her in a glittering sphere, and concluding with an earnest desire of her sending him a line of comfort from her dear hand.

The letter somewhat surprised our heroine, that she could not tell how to proceed; however, she resolved to shew it her governess, who no sooner saw it than she inwardly rejoiced, and smiling at Rosamond, she advised her to send the King a favourable answer, and not let too much modesty hinder her from being mistress to so great a King. This made her blush struggling hard with herself, until at last this crafty matron used so many pressing arguments, that she consented to return

the King in answer, telling him, That she was astonished at receiving his letter; but as to her being in a glittering sphere, it was a thing which she ne'er had wished for; not daring to give herself the liberty to think what his majesty might mean by it; only assuring him, in whatever was agreeable to the rules of modesty, she was his most obedient servant.



The governess having got this letter from the young Lady, sent it to the King, who upon receiving it, kissed it a hundred and a hundred times, resolving not to be long without the enjoyment of this fair creature, which however he found some difficulty in effecting, as will appear in the next chapter.



C H A P. III.

The King, after much Difficulty gets
Rosamond to Court.

IT happened that the Lady Clifford, going into her daughter's closet, there espied the King's letter to Rosamond, at which, being very much surprised, she called her daughter, and asked her the meaning of that letter. Rosamond was as much surprised at the question, and not knowing what answer to make, made her blushes pass for one.—Her mother took the letter to her father, who was much disturbed thereat, and both came together to her chamber, and upbraided her with being a concubine to the King. Rosamond at this kneeling down upon her knees, solemnly protested, that she was still a pure and unblemished virgin, and had never giving herself up to the King's embraces, or those of any other man.

This solemn protestation somewhat appeased her father's anger, who for satis-

faction of his mind, desired her to tell the whole truth, which she did, from the first courtship of the King, to the receiving of the letter. When they had heard her story, they both advised her against yielding to the King's embraces, and told her that for her own security, she had better go to a kinsman of his at Cornwall, and reside some time.

To this Rosamond agreeing, they sent her an dher governess to Cornwall, where they thought she would be safe. But all their endeavours were in vain; for the governess being largely bribed by King Henry, was all this while the grand intriguer in this love affair, who sent the King a full account of all things that had passed, and how far they were sent to take the air.

King Henry having this intelligence, resolved to have her out of their hands, and thereupon sent for her uncle, who being come, he told him he had a piece of service to command him in, which was to go to his kinsman's in Cornwall, and use his best endeavours to bring Rosamond to the court, without her parents knowledge.

Her uncle was somewhat surpris'd at the king's demand, but the consideration of losing the great offices he held under the King, made him undertake the ungrateful service, which was imposed upon him. Accordingly coming to where the King had directed him, he made as if he had called by chance, being come about other business. After some discourse he asked her if she would go up to court, to which she seeming not much unwilling, without any more ado, he provided a chariot for her Journey, and attended by her governess, brought her to court, and put her in some private lodging appointed for her reception.

Her uncle having acquainted the King that she was come, and how he had disposed of her, he came that night to visit her; and now seeing that beauty in its full bloom, which before was but blooming, he was surpris'd both with wonder and amazement.

After some love discourse had passed between them, the King took his leave, telling her, He would not disturb her that night, on account of the fatigue of the journey, but that he would visit her again

shortly. So charging her uncle to have a particular regard to her, and see that she wanted nothing, he departed.

Her governess did all she could to persuade her to yield to the King's embraces, but Rosamond seemed averse to it, her father's words still running in her mind. The King having visited Rosamond two or three times, began to grow impatient, and thought it was high time to have some close conversation with her, and if possible, to make her submit to his embraces. To this end he came one evening, and told her, He perceived that she had not the value for him which he thought she had.

Rosamond not understanding the King's meaning, protested, That so great a value she had for him, that was she to see him wounded, and her heart's blood would do him any good, she would freely resign it for him. To this the King, fetching a sigh, answered, Ah, my Rosamond since you will force me to speak, Know it is your beauty that hath wounded me, love calls for love, neither can my wounds be cured without enjoyment.

It is not easy to imagine how great was the surprise that Rosamond was in at this discovery, and fain would she have got out of bed, but the King would not let her. She made many efforts to get away, but finding them all in vain, she at last yielded herself to the King's embraces, which pleased him so well, that before morning he pleased her too.

For a time these lovers often met, and enjoyed their wanton dalliances; but the King had been wont to shew the same kindness to others, who finding themselves neglected for this peerless beauty, soon spread abroad the King's familiarity with Rosamond.



Rosamond was extremely surpris'd at what the King had said, and begged him to ask her life, or any thing that was in her power to give, so it was not her honour. The King was mightily surpris'd to hear such words from her, as thinking to have made an easy conquest; and was as much in love with her virtue, as he was before with her beauty.

The King having left Rosamond went to her Governess, and told her what a repulse he met with from Rosamond instead of the enjoyment he expected. She is one that was hardened in wickedness, answered, If your Majesty would be assisted by me, I could put you in a way to succeed, which is, you should come into my chamber at night, and I'll convey you to Rosamond when she is asleep.—At this contrivance the King was much pleased, and accordingly was with her at the time appointed, and was conveyed into Rosamond's chamber.

She was asleep when he first went to bed, but laying closer to her than her governess used to do, she waked of herself, and then the King discovered himself.



C H A P. IV.

The King builds a Bower for Rosamond,
and soon after leaves her.

THE envious Queen Eleanor, when she perceived neither kind words nor threats would wean the King's love from his new mistress, set her engines to work to fright her from his arms, and several letters were dropt in her lodgings threatening her destruction, which were shewed to the King ; whereupon he appointed a strong guard to wait upon her at home and abroad.—And to remove her farther [from the Queen's sight, he caused a fine palace to be built at Woodstock, in Oxfordshire, which was so very ingeniously contrived, that none could enter into the apartment where Rosamond generally resided, without the help of a clew of silver thread.

This more vexed the enraged Queen, wherefore she consulted with her sons, then men grown, how to be revenged ; and after many things proposed, it was

agreed that prince Edward should go and join the French, to raise war against his father in Normandy, which if he affected speedily, would draw the King to the aid of his subjects, and so in his absence the Queen might the better effect the ruin of Rosamond.

Prince Richard immediately went to the task, which when the King heard, he raised an army, resolved to pass the seas, and put an end to those tumults. Rosamond when she heard this dismal news, threw herself on the ground, tearing her hair, and lamenting of her hard fortune; in which condition the King found her, when he came to bid her farewell; and when she saw him, she fell on his neck, crying, Ah! my dearest Prince. is then fortune so unkind to us, that we must so soon part? and as my presaging soul forebodes, for the last time in this world. Oh! take me with you, for there is no safety for me in this world, but in your royal camp.

She would have proceeded, but the King stopped her mouth with many tender kisses, and interrupting her, said, My dearest Rose, you are not fit to brook the

toils of war, ladies cannot endure the fatigues and hardships of camps, peace and delightful pleasures are most agreeable to their temper. He then called to him Sir Thomas her uncle, to whom he said, I commit this inestimable Jewel to your care, and command you on your life that none be permitted to see her till I return. And my fair mistress, I shall often write to you, and expect your answers.— But Rosamond, con inued the King, I think there is something so mournful in this our parting, that I could hang for ever on thy neck : but I have far to go, and must hasten.—And so have I, said Rosamond, if death is far.—And so in tears they parted.



C H A P. V.

On the King's Departure, the Queen finds means to enter the Bower and murder Fair Rosamond.

FAIR, but disconsolate Rosamond, as soon as the King was out of sight, with a dismal ear-piercing cry, threw herself down upon the couch, and fell into a swoon; from which, when her attendants recovered her, she so often fainted, that her maids had much ado to keep life in her; but when she recovered she gave herself up to deep sorrow and melancholy, refusing to be comforted for several weeks, her sleep still going from her, and when she slumbered a little, she started, crying, O save me, save me, here is the Queen! she has got me at last! and with the fright she waked, scared and terrified with her dreams.—Nor was it without reason that Rosamond was thus afflicted in her mind, for all this while Queen Eleanor was plotting her destruction: To effect which, she first proposed it to some favourites, whom she raise

from a low condition, to a high promotion; but they started at it, as a thing full of danger, seeing if it was known, their lives would surely be forfeited and lost at the King's return, unless they fled the land, and left all behind them.

This so enraged the jealous Queen, that she reviled them with reproaches of cowardice and ingratitude, for the many favours she had heaped upon them, which with some persuasions and large offers, prevailed so far with some of her domesticks, that they resolved to stand by her in any dangerous attempt.

It being summer time, she undertook a progress, as she gave it out for health, attended by the conspirators, appointing a set time for her companions to hide themselves in a cave that was near the bower, and at the sound of the horn to do as she required; at the same time giving one of them directions to dress like a post-man, and carry a letter as if it came from the King, and when he had delivered it to blow his horn.

This cunning device took, for the too credulous Knight seeing only the postman, came without the gate, when, upon the

signal given those in ambush, they rushed upon him.— He fought valiantly with them, and was seconded by their guards, but being overpowered by numbers, he was slain, with many of the guards belonging to both parties.— The fight being over, and the gates seized by her party, the Queen came to the palace, and getting the silver clue, she entered the bower, and in an upper room she found the beauteous and Fair Rosamond, shining bright like an angel.

Fair Rosamond, when she saw the angry Queen before her, trembled from head to foot, and falling on her knees, implored her mercy and pardon for her offences, and begged she would forgive her for a crime she was constrained to act, and promised immediately to cloister up herself in a nunnery, leave the Kingdom, or do any thing else her majesty required of her.

The Queen being inflexible, told her none of her excuses would prevail; and presenting her with a bowl of poison and a dagger, saying, You harlot, now make your choice; if your curious and dainty

palate cannot relish poison, I have got steel for you.

The sorrowful Lady perceiving there was no remedy, but she must die, stood upon her feet, and with abundance of tears and piteous wringing of her hands, she begged mercy of God for her youthful sins and failings, desiring that all other stately beauties might be warned by her fall, not to be proud and aspiring, but rather contented with a lowly state and condition: and often calling for mercy, she with trembling hands put the bowl up to her mouth, and drank the poison, which ended her life. The Queen had her buried with the rest that were slain, and she departed, rejoicing in the success her revenge had on her rival, but little thought of the misery it would pull on her own head.

The King soon after returned home, but had no sooner news of this tragical end, than his great joy was turned into mourning, and in distraction he rent his robes, shut himself up in a chamber, and would not suffer any one to speak to him for many days.

When the King had a little eased his grief, he summoned his Judges, and ordered them to make a strict enquiry for those that were guilty of so heinous a crime; who fearing his displeasure, were so diligent therein, that most of them were apprehended, tried, and put to the most cruel tortures, and they accused the Queen, and laid the blame upon her, who was not able to excuse herself, for so great was the King's anger, that neither her apologies, tears, nor the intercession of his Nobles in her behalf, could appease his wrath; but she being a foreign princess her life was spared; yet the King not only for ever renounced her, but confined her for her life-time to a close imprisonment, commanding, if she died there, her body should not be buried, but lay and moulder to dust.—Nor would he forgive her at his own death (for she out-lived him, and was set at liberty after his decease by his son Richard, who succeeded him; and the Queen, as considering the hardships of imprisonment by experience, she by her own liberality, and the interest she had with her son, for the most part

sets the prison gates open, as well to criminals as debtors,

King Henry having thus wreaked his vengeance on the murderers of his lovely Rosamond caused her body to be taken out of that obscure grave wherein the Queen had caused her to be laid, and buried with all grand funeral pomp at Godstow, in Oxfordshire. erecting to her memory a very stately tomb, on which was this inscription :

Within this tomb lies the world's chiefest
Rose ;

She who was sweet will now offend
the Nose 10 JU 52

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